

UNC Planning's Diversity Committee

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In 1999, recognizing the growing importance of diversity within the field of planning, a few dedicated students at the UNC Department of City and Regional Planning established a Diversity Committee, with the mission of raising awareness about issues of diversity within the department and the field of planning. In recent years, the committee has grown from those first few students and single faculty advisor into a core group of ten or more active student participants, and two dedicated faculty advisors. In addition, the committee successfully engages the entire DCRP community through diversity training workshops. The committee now supports a broad range of activities related to education, outreach, and scholarship in DCRP.

The members of the Diversity Committee focus on the following issues: integration of diversity-related matters into the curriculum, recruitment of faculty members and students from underrepresented backgrounds, supporting minority students, and provision of a forum to discuss issues of equity, social justice, and diversity in planning. Assisted by faculty members Phil Berke and Mai Nguyen, the committee defines diversity broadly to incorporate topics such as age, income, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and geography.

This past September 15th, the DCRP Diversity Committee hosted the second annual diversity workshop and training session, with participants from all parts of the department. A trained facilitator led the morning session, an introductory diversity workshop for first year students. John Cooper (DCRP Ph.D., 2004) followed in the afternoon, leading a department-wide reflection on

diversity and planning. As part of this session, smaller groups formed to tackle specific questions, such as "What does diversity mean in a planning framework?" The Committee plans to continue this annual series of diversity workshops into the future.

In addition to the workshop, the committee hosts speakers throughout the academic year. These speakers help raise awareness about emerging diversity-related topics within the planning profession. For example, in the spring of 2006, the committee hosted an alumni panel, bringing in several DCRP alums to discuss issues of diversity and planning in the workplace. Finally, the committee is continuing its efforts to diversify the student applicant pool by helping to recruit students from a broader range of backgrounds.

To find out more about the Diversity Committee, please visit:

<http://www.planning.unc.edu/diversity/Diversity.html>.